

Jeremy Armstrong and Michael P. Fronda, eds. *Romans at War: Citizens, Soldiers, and Society in Republican Rome* (London & New York: Routledge, 2020, 374pp., 6 b/w illustr., eBook, ISBN 9781138480193)

*Romans at War: Soldiers, Citizens, and Society in the Roman Republic* is a collection of essays offered to Professor Nathan Rosenstein on the occasion of his retirement. Some of the papers were presented originally at the Celtic Conference in Classics, held in Montreal, Canada in 2017. Other papers were invited separately. The book is composed of fifteen chapters framed by a Preface, an introductory Chapter 1, and a concluding chapter by Rosenstein. A short compilation of maps of the Italian peninsula complements the book, as a help for readers not fully familiarized with Italian political geography.

In Chapter 1 the editors introduce the volume, describing their motivation to honour Nathan Rosenstein, and providing an overview of the relevant and long-lasting scholarship of Roman army studies, a topic addressed both by modern and ancient scholars, headed by Polybius. As Momigliano discusses in the book *Alien Wisdom* (1990), the relevance of Polybius' and Posidonius' apologetic work could be read as a lesson to the history of Rome itself and as a lesson to their Greek fellows, from an emic perspective, that is, that of Polybius as Rome's hostage and as a brother in arms of Scipio Aemilianus. The introductory chapter reveals how central the study of the Roman army has been for a broader understanding of Roman politics and the early expansionism of Rome over Ancient Latium, Italy, the Mediterranean basin, and beyond. Also, the study of the Roman army and the search for the key to Imperial success were central topics in the crafting of modern politics and the formation of European empires (Stek & Pelgrom, 2014). A smart decision from the editors is to organize the

papers into three large chronological groups, ranging from the earlier Roman wars for the conquest of Latium Vetus, to the Second Punic War, which changes both the Italian and Mediterranean politics in the mid-Republican period, and eventually, the Late-Republican Social War, with some papers taping also into the very last Republican Civil Wars, with Octavian as the vanquisher of Mark Antony and the Republican military tradition.

Armstrong & Fronda's introductory chapter (Ch. 1) is core to the aim of the book, and that explains my interest in refuting some of the strongly Classical research inflected statements of research contained in it. For example, it is stated that "traditional" military histories focusing on specific wars have fallen out of favour, and relatively few scholarly publications are dedicated to the analysis of individual battles'. While this statement could be true for ancient history, we should acknowledge the important advances recently carried out in the archaeology of conflict and battlefields in many areas of Europe, including the UK (e.g. on Roman army events). Research such as Caesar's battle for Gaul (Fitzpatrick & Haselgrove, 2019), the Second Punic War's battles in Spain (Bellón Ruiz et al., 2009; Jiménez, 2020), or the renewed view of Octavius' military operations in the Iberian North (Menéndez Blanco, 2020) should be taken into account as part of a broader analysis of deeper processes that shaped the history of the Roman army and had an impact on ancient writers, such as Polybius or Appian. For example, Luculus' campaign against the Vaccaei in the Duero river valley may be taken as an example of personal agendas within the Republican system (Terrenato, 2019).

Chapters 2 and 3 discuss some of the firmly established Roman historical legends such as the end of the monarchy, the foundation of the Republic, and the establishment of a political system around the Senate and the Consuls. These two chapters (by Drogula, Ch. 2, and Vanderpuy, Ch. 3) offer relevant lessons about the role of the *reges* and warlords, *gentes*, in the warfare state in ancient Latium. Most remarkable were the capabilities of both the *rex* and other oligarchic members to levy state or personal armies to raid against other bands or clans. Eventually, the estate and private armies were thrown against other city-states of the Latium Vetus with the result of gain for Rome's territory, and other side effects as the increasing debt and the consolidation of Rome's civic structure.

Chapters 4 to 12 delve into the complex mid-Republican period, an epoch where transformations dramatically affected the nature of Rome's policy towards the rest of Italy, but also towards their citizens and their gods. That this compilation of papers is lengthy compared to the other sections is of course due to the relevance of the mid-Republic in the consolidation of Rome's core concepts such as taxation (*tributum*), the urban nucleus of diverse status (*civitates tribus*), the army recruitment (*dilectus*), the personal value in battle (*virtus*), and the distribution of public land or *ager publicus* among colonists, *citizens*, allies. This group of papers presents a series of very welcome and highly interesting analyses of cross-cutting topics. These include aspects of the classes from the highest levels of the social ladder, the role of the senate or the generals to the poorest strata in the army, and the impoverished colonies which were not capable of participating in the *dilectus*. Also of interest to the reader is the approach to gender roles in the sphere of both gods and humans in Serrati's paper "Take the

Sword Away from That Girl!" Combat, Gender, and Vengeance in the Middle Republic'. This paper is attractive since it helps to understand how the state of warfare also contributed to shape gender relations in ancient Rome. The chapter also prompted me to reflect on the impact of the research of the Roman army group (<http://romanarmy.eu/en/about-the-project/decálogo/>), of which I am a member, on both the general public and researchers, and how attractive the history of the Roman army could be to a more diverse range of public regarding age and gender (García Sánchez et al., 2019).

The following three chapters (Chs 13–15), by Clark, Brice, and Well respectively, delve into the complex Roman army system we find in the Late Republic. Authors reflect on how the army became a system or mechanism to help oligarchic classes to push forward their political interests, not a big difference from the *gentes* warlords who took the military power from the early *reges* discussed in earlier papers. The papers within this Late Republican section, which ends in the Social Wars with some notes on the final Civil Wars between Octavian and Marcus Antonius, reflect the changing face of Rome in that period. Rome was a powerful state that, after the devastating Hannibalic Wars, was forced to change their politics against other Italic people, *socii*.

To close, Nathan Rosenstein offers a final paper reflecting on the topics addressed by the preceding chapters and, while discussing the most relevant points raised by the different papers, he transmits his vast knowledge on Roman army history and throws some ideas for future research, such as the 'ideological dimensions of war' or the 'memory and performative turn' in Roman military studies, as presented by Armstrong (Ch. 5) and Fronza (Ch. 10). Rosenstein notes the fact that no paper examines battles or campaigns, despite the contribution that

such research can make to measure what is transmitted in the sources, as the above cited archaeological studies demonstrate.

I cannot disagree with Rosenstein's last sentences, a great call to all the scholars involved in the study of the Roman army: 'War is too important a subject to be left to popularizers, whose knowledge too often is a generation or two out of date and whose ideas about how the Romans waged war do a disservice to the realities involved.' And 'to ignore the popular audience for Roman military history—or any other field of history for that matter—does a disservice both to the public and to our profession.' A magnificent colophon to a book which will help any type of Roman historian and archaeologist to better understand the intertwined formation of the Republic and the Roman institutions. However, hopefully these statements will be taken seriously by young scholars, not only by those who, like Rosenstein, enjoy a privileged vision of the Roman army studies after many years of devoted research.

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Human actions and, hence, material remains of human actions are rooted in space. It therefore comes as no surprise

that archaeology shows such a deep interest for spatial patterns, spatial relationships, and spatiality. Spatial thinking has a